

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1615

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5531

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJ: BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS

1. IN THE LAST 24 HOURS THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN BOLIVIA HAS TAKEN A SHARP TURN FOR THE WORSE. THE TWO MAJOR EVENTS OF LAST NIGHT WERE THE FOLLOWING.

A. THE ELECTORAL COURT RELEASED A NEW COUNT OF THE VOTES IN POTOSI DEPARTMENT, WHERE HERNAN SILES HAD BEEN LEADING BY A MARGIN OF 2 1/2 TO 1, INCREASING PEREDA'S VOTES BY OVER 50,000 AND REDUCING (SIC) SILES' VOTES BY 7000. THIS SUSPECT NEW COUNT, IF AUTHENTICATED BY THE COURT, WOULD MAKE JUAN PEREDA PRESIDENT WITH OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE AND A MAJORITY OF THE CONGRESS.

B. THE THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES OF HERNAN SILES, VICTOR PAZ, AND RENE BERNAL SIGNED A POLITICAL PACT PROTESTING FRAUD OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEREDA FORCES AGAINST ALL OF THEM AND DECLARING THAT NONE WOULD COOPERATE WITH PEREDA IN THE NEW CONGRESS. (SEPTEL).

2. THE IMPLICATIONS ARE BLEAK.

AANTHE MILITARY WILL NOW LOSE THEIR PREVIOUSLY GROWING
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INTEREST IN CLEANING UP THE ELECTORAL RESULTS SINCE THIS WOULD PROBABLY PUT THE ELECTION INTO THE CONGRESS WHERE LEFTIST HERNAN SILES, IF THE OPPOSITION PACT HOLDS, COULD EMERGE PRESIDENT (EVEN THOUGH HE HAS NO MORE THAN 20-25 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE).

--THE HARASSED NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT MAY HAVE DISPAIRED

OF ANY EFFORT TO CLEAN UP THE ELECTORAL RETURNS, JUDGING FROM ITS ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SUSPECT POTOSI RETURNS.

--PEREDA MAY BE ELECTED PRESIDENT VIA IRREGULARITIES, BUT WILL HEAD A WEAK AND PARTIALLY DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT.

-- HE WILL FACE A BITTER, UNITED AND STRIDENT OPPOSITION WHOSE SIZE AND FERVOR WILL BE THE RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN HAM-HANDED EFFORTS TO TILT THE ELECTIONS.

--THE PROSPECTS FOR DISORDER AND VIOLENCE HAVE INCREASED SHARPLY.

3. IN SHORT, PEREDA, WHO WOULD HAVE WON A SIZEABLE PLURALITY IN CLEAN ELECTIONS AND COULD HAVE EASILY FORMED A COALITION WITH EITHER OF HIS TWO MODERATE OPPONENTS, PAZ AND BERNAL, HAS CLUMSILY PULLED A MORAL DEFEAT FROM THE FAWS OF NEAR-CERTAIN VICTORY. BOLIVIAN POLITICS MAY NOW BE STARKLY POLARIZED BETWEEN RIGHT AND LEFT, WITH NEITHER ABLE TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT REPRESSION--AN UNNECESSARY AND DANGEROUS RESULT. BOEKER

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